

4. Multiple Disabilities



People with severe or multiple disabilities may exhibit a wide range of characteristics, depending on the combination and severity of disabilities and the person's age. Some of these characteristics may include:

- Limited speech or communication;
- Difficulty in basic physical mobility;
- Tendency to forget skills through disuse;
- Trouble generalizing skills from one situation to another; or
- A need for support in daily living and major life activities.

A variety of medical problems may accompany multiple disabilities.

Programming Considerations

- Need to be aware of participant's abilities and disability and what level of support they would require to successfully participate in activities.
- The focus should be on providing a sense of achievement and full participation.
- Have alternatives in mind.
- Ensure the necessary support is available and that adaptive equipment is prepared.
- Individuals who are non-verbal will need their name and phone number placed somewhere such as on a bracelet or chain.
- Careful consideration should be given to programming as to some individuals will be unable or afraid to try activities. It will be necessary to develop a rapport and provide encouragement to build confidence.

Strategies for Inclusion

- Structured activities and small groups will work best.

Behaviour Management Issues

- Repetition and familiarity makes the participant feel safe so when distressed the individual may relax when allowed to indulge in repetitive interests.